

Having A Basic Understanding of Some Old Testament Truths

Part 76 – Ezra Reads The Law Through The Covenant With God (Nehemiah 8-9)

1. Who requested Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the Law of Moses?

*“And **all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street** that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel” (Nehemiah 8:1).*

Think of how rare it has been for the children of Israel to gather “as one man”. When the Levite sent his concubine in 12 pieces to the children of Israel after she had been raped to death is one time (**Judges 20:1; 8; 11**). The second time was in restoration of worship (**Ezra 3:11ff.**). Then here.

We should always be of such a mind (**Acts 2:46** and **Philippians 2:2**).

2. Who did Ezra bring the Law before?

“And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month” (Nehemiah 8:2).

3. Were the people attentive to the reading of the Law of Moses?

Yes: *“And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate **from the morning until midday**, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and **the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law**” (Nehemiah 8:3).*

4. Were the people reverent before God?

*“(4) And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Mishael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam. (5) And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and **when he opened it, all the people stood up**: (6) And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And **all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground**” (Nehemiah 8:4-6).*

Worshipping with faces to the ground does show reverence (**II Chronicles 20:15-18**).

5. Did it matter at all whether or not the people understood God’s word?

Yes: *“So they read in the book in the law of God **distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading**” (Nehemiah 8:8).*

6. Why shouldn’t the people have been grieved on the day they heard the word of God?

*“(9) And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, **This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep**. **For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law**. (10) Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; **for the joy of the LORD is your strength**. (11) So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved. (12) And all the people went their way to eat, and to*

*drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, **because they had understood the words that were declared unto them***” (Nehemiah 8:9-12).

They were previously commanded to rejoice at this time (Deuteronomy 16:10-15). It was a good day (Esther 9:19).

The joy of the Lord is your strength (Psalms 5:11; 16:11; 146:5).

Their understanding will help them with being happy (Proverbs 3:13).

7. Why did the leaders of Israel gather on the second day?

“And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law” (Nehemiah 8:13).

8. Did they learn anything new on the second day?

Yes: *“(14) And **they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:*** (15) *And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, and palm branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as it is written”* (Nehemiah 8:14-15; cf. Leviticus 23:42-43).

9. What did they do with what they’ve learned on the second day?

They took action to see it was done: *“(16) So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim. (17) **And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun unto that day had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness**”* (Nehemiah 8:16-17).

They had not practiced this since before Judges 2:8.

10. Were the children of Israel interested in learning the truth daily?

Yes: *“Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner”* (Nehemiah 8:18).

God’s people have always been strongest when there was daily teaching (Acts 2:42-47, Acts 5:40-42, Acts 17:10-11, and Hebrews 3:13).

11. As we begin chapter nine (the first verse), do we find any signs of repentance among the people?

Yes: *“Now in the twenty and fourth day of this month **the children of Israel were assembled with fasting, and with sackclothes, and earth upon them**”* (Nehemiah 9:1).

12. Did the children of Israel desire to separate themselves from sin?

Yes: *“And the seed of Israel **separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers**”* (Nehemiah 9:2; cf. II Corinthians 6:14-18 and James 4:4).

13. What big difference do you see about God's people here in our context and those claiming to be today (hint: how long are people today willing to hear God's word and worship Him)?

*"And they stood up in their place, **and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God**" (Nehemiah 9:3).*

14. Did the children of Israel recognize God created all things?

Yes: *"(4) Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, and Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God. (5) Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, and Pethahiah, said, Stand up and bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise. (6) Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Nehemiah 9:4-6; cf. Isaiah 42:5; 45:18).*

Fools deny God (**Psalms 14:1**).

15. Have the children of Israel learned enough to know how far back the seed promise went?

Yes: *"(7) Thou art the LORD the God, who didst choose Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham; (8) And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give it, I say, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou art righteous" (Nehemiah 9:7-8).*

16. Had the children of Israel learned enough to realize how much God did in delivering Israel out of Egypt?

Yes: *"(9) And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red sea; (10) And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst thou get thee a name, as it is this day. (11) And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters. (12) Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go" (Nehemiah 9:9-12).*

17. Were the children of Israel able to know about the delivering of the Law?

Yes: *"(13) Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: (14) And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant" (Nehemiah 9:13-14).*

18. Who was given credit for feeding the Israelites when they came out of Egypt?

God: *"And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land*

which thou hadst sworn to give them” (Nehemiah 9:15). Remember their doubts (Exodus 15:23-26; 16:1-8).

19. Did the children of Israel realize, from the Exodus from Egypt, how apostasy occurs?

Yes: “(16) But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments, (17) And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not. (18) Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations” (Nehemiah 9:16-18).

Hardened hearts and refusing to obey (Psalms 95:6-11 and Acts 7:51-53).

20. In their praising of God, what summary was given about God’s mercy in delivering Israel into the land of Canaan?

“(19) Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go. (20) Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst. (21) Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, so that they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not. (22) Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan. (23) Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess it. (24) So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would” (Nehemiah 9:19-24).

21. Had the children of Israel been able to learn from the apostasy, which occurred after their fathers, entered into the land of Canaan?

Yes: “(26) Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations. (27) **Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.** (28) But after they had rest, **they did evil again** before thee: therefore leftest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest them from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies; (29) And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear. (30) Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy

prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands” (Nehemiah 9:26-30).

22. Why didn’t God utterly destroy the children of Israel in the past?

“Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou art a gracious and merciful God” (Nehemiah 9:31).

God had a plan in the past and present for the future (**I Kings 15:4-5, II Kings 19:34, and Hebrews 7:14**).

23. Did the children of Israel understand that the punishments God has given are just?

Yes: “(32) Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day. (33) Howbeit thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: (34) Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them. (35) For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works” (Nehemiah 9:32-35).

24. What did the children of Israel write and seal?

*“(36) Behold, we are servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: (37) And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we are in great distress. (38) And because of all this **we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it**” (Nehemiah 9:36-38).*